

FORT WORTH

Where the West Begins

Fort Worth was originally 1 of 7 forts that were set up in 1848/9 (after the Mexican War) to protect settlers of West Texas. The original fort was abandoned in 1853. With Fort Worth becoming a stop along the Chisholm Trail (the route taken to drive cattle to market in the north), it developed into a bustling town and was soon known as "Cowtown". For the cowboys, it was their last taste of civilization before heading on to Dodge City in Kansas (the end of the Chisholm trail), so they played hard, frequenting the saloons, drinking, dancing and gambling.

Fort Worth is now the 5th largest city in Texas and about a 1.5-hour drive from where we live. The slogan for Fort Worth is "Cowboys and Culture" and you certainly can't help but notice its cowboy roots! Fort Worth was very interesting and a great place to spend the weekend.



What we got up to in Fort Worth:

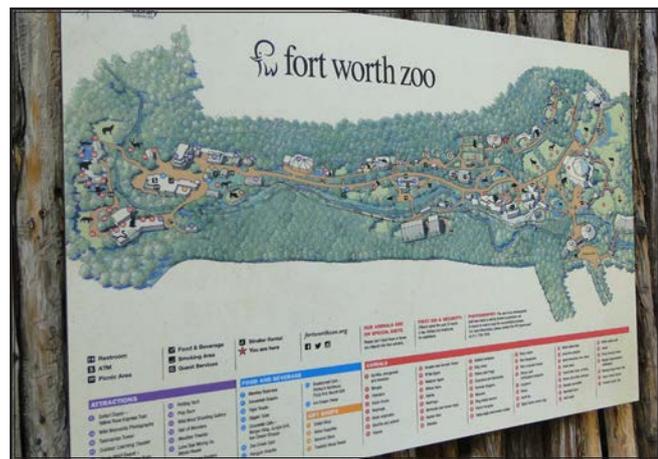
Fort Worth Zoo - Friday 4th July

Fort Worth Zoo is the oldest zoo in Texas and was founded in 1909 with less than a dozen animals; it now has 7000 native and exotic animals and

covers 64 acres.

The zoo is large, requiring a lot of walking, and it was another hot day in Texas (in summer, it's always hot) when we went, but there is a little train (The Yellow Rose Express) which you can ride on, covering about 3/4 the length of the zoo and there are plenty of misting fans along the way to help cool you down.

Aside from the 12 permanent exhibits (including Raptor Canyon, Asian Falls, African Savannah, Parrot Paradise, World of



Primates and Australian Outback/ Great Barrier Reef) there is also Texas Wild!, which houses an additional 7 exhibits covering 8 acres; it resembles something of a wild west township,



The exhibit I found most disappointing was the 'Australian Outback', which had very little other than a couple of grey and red kangaroos and cockatoos. One odd sight was a squirrel running around with a kangaroo – not something you see every day!



but contains some interesting information and displays about Texas and it's wildlife. I found all the exhibits to be pretty good, in particular, the tiger enclosure,

There was a special exhibit on at the time of our visit, "Gigantabugs", which saw 13 giant animatronic bugs on display. These were fabulous!



the Rhinos, The Great Apes, the Raptors and a special mention for the elephant enclosure, which is great and home to 2 very adorable baby elephants (Bowie and Belle) born in 2013.



The zoo ranks in the top 5 of all zoos in the US and is definitely worth a visit.

Sundance square - Friday & Saturday 4th & 5th July

Sundance Square is right in the middle of downtown Fort Worth and covers an area of 35 blocks, incorporating residences, businesses, shopping and entertainment. There are many, many restaurants and bars around the area and you are spoilt for choice for somewhere to eat and drink.

There are quite a few beautiful historic buildings nestled amongst the towering modern glass buildings, one worth mentioning is the red brick “Knights of Pythias Castle Hall”



dating from 1901. Another one of the more interesting buildings scattered around the square was the home of the



Reata restaurant which consists of 4 stories of dining options. We stopped in the down stairs bar area to partake of an alcoholic beverage (or 2) whilst soaking up the wonderful historic atmosphere

and “leather-rich ranch décor” of this lovely building. The rooftop bar and dining patio was a winner for us though. After having a few drinks Friday evening, we decided to go back Saturday evening for dinner. What a wonderful way to finish a great day - to sit back and enjoy a hot night, dining on delicious food on the covered patio, drinking wonderful



cocktails by the rooftop bar, watching the sun set and the city light up!

I think the heart and focal point of Sundance Square is the Plaza which is an open paved area containing a 216 jet fountain shooting water up



from the ground creating a wonderful dancing spectacle, a stepped “wave wall” fountain and four very large and impressive ‘umbrellas’ that provide shade over an area of 80 x 80 feet. Just by the jet fountain the side of one of the buildings has a large mural commemorating the



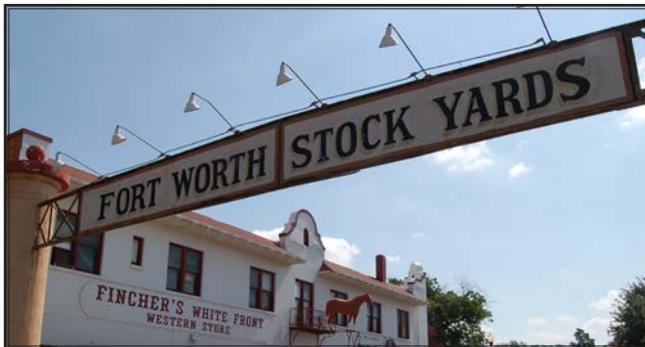
Fort Worth segment of the Chisholm Trail cattle drives of 1867-1875. The Chisholm Trail was used to drive cattle overland from ranches in Texas to the Kansas railheads where the cattle was sold and shipped. Cowboys on the Chisholm Trail would frequent some of the many saloons, shooting galleries,



gambling parlours and dance halls that Fort Worth had to offer. The likes of Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid (whom the square was named for) were frequent patrons. Doc Holiday and Wyatt Earp were also sometimes visitors.

Fort Worth Stockyards - Sat 5th July

The Fort Worth Stockyards is a historic district covering 98 acres (15 square blocks), situated north of Fort Worth CBD, which began operating as a livestock market in 1866.



Between 1866 and 1890 more than four million head of cattle were trailed through Fort Worth ("Cowtown"). Interestingly, they are the last standing stockyards in the United States. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 sometime after the last cattle sales at the Stockyards.



The Stockyards is a very popular (and somewhat touristy) area that unabashedly celebrates the long-held traditional association of Fort Worth with the cattle industry. You will find quite a few touristy shops, but also some genuine country clothing retailers (western wear) and



boot makers, a couple of museums (including The Cowboy Hall of Fame), a healthy supply of places to eat (particularly a good steak) and drink, as well as bars and nightclubs. You can also go to a rodeo, see a gunfighters show or go to the world's largest honky-tonk.



Not to be missed is the cattle drive that occurs twice daily where 'genuine cowboys' drive Longhorn Cattle ("The Herd") up and down Exchange Ave. There was a lot to see and do in the Stockyards; we were there only for a day and we enjoyed it, but I think some time spent enjoying the nightlife of the Stockyards would be quite an experience!